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SUBJECT: BRAZIL: DRUG TRAFFICKING UP, DRUG FLIGHTS DOWN
PART 2: A REPORT FROM PARA AND MARANHAO

REF: A. BRASILIA 588

[1](#)B. BRASILIA 56

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Brazil's Air Bridge Denial ("shootdown") program has diminished drug flights in Brazil, and as a result, traffickers are increasingly using riverine routes to transport drugs out of the country. The state of Para sees much of this riverine trafficking. The combination of tributaries, estuaries, and hundreds of islands that dot the landscape on the mouth of the Amazon river in Para state create thousands of hideaways that traffickers of illicit goods use to avoid scrutiny. Monitoring of the riverways on the part of the state and federal authorities is effectively nonexistent, as law enforcement forces in the state face daunting resource and personnel challenges. Assignments to Para are not the path to career advancement in the Federal Police, and positions there are often filled by the least experienced of officers, who serve a few years and move on to better assignments. Maranhao, on the other hand, does not suffer from international drug trafficking, but a critical shortage of resources, stemming from its status as the second poorest state in Brazil, leaves it ill equipped to deal with myriad public security problems. End summary.

A Safe Route Through the Amazon River for Traffickers

[1](#)2. (SBU) Emboff traveled to Para and Maranhao in late September to discuss drug trafficking and public security (septel will report on trafficking in persons, forced labor, and exploitation of women and children in those states). According to Cleomenes de Alencar, a police officer in the intelligence division of the Federal Police (DPF) office in the state of Para, since the establishment of the "shootdown" program they have seen a decrease in the number of drug flights and a consequent increase in the use of riverine routes to transport drugs out of Brazil. Federal Prosecutor Ubiratan Cazetta, who specializes in international drugs and crime, noted that the geography of the state is particularly favorable to traffickers who use riverine routes. The island of Marajo in particular, he noted, is filled with hideouts and favorable spots for transshipment of goods. One method

often used by traffickers is to hide drugs in wood exports, such as doors, with hollowed out areas for drugs, mostly cocaine.

13. (SBU) Regional Superintendent of the Federal Police in the State of Para, Manuel Fernando Abbadi, noted that the police's ability to monitor drug trafficking through the Amazon is negligible; their operations are all intelligence based, since there is no patrolling going on in the rivers. The State military police does no patrolling in the rivers and the Federal Police only has four boats to monitor the riverways in Para, all of which were out of commission on repairs at the time.

14. (SBU) Asked about the Federal Police's presence in Para, he noted that in addition to the office in Belem, there were federal police stations in Maraba, Redencao, Santarem, Altamira and a small forward post in Obido. Most of these, however, consist of only a few police officers. Alencar noted that despite the decrease in drug flights, there is still a considerable amount of trafficking taking place through air routes, and there remain clandestine air strips throughout the states. Furthermore, he noted, the Federal Police essentially stopped its efforts to take out the strips with explosives, a futile effort since new strips can crop up overnight. He drew a horizontal line starting in Maraba and noted that below that line (an area roughly the size of Germany) and in some parts above it, there was a general problem of governance, as there is no state presence, adding that "there are many clandestine landing strips in those

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areas still in use".

Federal Police Has Seen Better Days

15. (SBU) Lack of experienced personnel is hampering efforts to stem the rising riverine drug trade. Asked for his assessment of the efforts of federal and local authorities, Prosecutor Cazetta observed that the local authorities were not competent to deal with international drug trafficking, and that even the Federal Police had its own set of problems.

"There has been a generational shift in DPF officers serving in Para," noted Cazetta. "While the new officers are smart and enthusiastic, for many their stint in Para is their first tour," he observed and added that there is now more of a rush to move on to "career enhancing assignments" outside the region after paying their dues in the less glamorous assignments such as Para. According to Cazetta, this higher rate of turnover has had a negative impact in the depth of knowledge and expertise of local realities and caused a weakening of relationships within the law enforcement entities in the state.

16. (SBU) Wilson Jose Barp, a professor of public security at the Federal University of Para, agreed that quality of personnel was an issue, particularly at the level of the state police forces. As professor within the university's RENAESP program--essentially a graduate degree in public security certified by the Ministry of Justice's National Secretariat for Public Security that is part of the Brazilian government's anti-crime plan PRONASCI (ref B)--he teaches courses for public security professionals, mostly state civil and military police officers. According to Barp, the students often show a rudimentary level of understanding of police tactics, technology, and investigative techniques. The impact from the creation of the RENAESP program up to this point has been limited, but should improve the quality of state police forces over time.

Maranhao: "We need more money for everything"

17. (SBU) The drug trafficking situation in the state of Maranhao, according to Telmo Macedo Fontoura, is not as much of a problem as in Para. Fontoura, a retired Federal Police officer and now special assistant to the State Secretary for Public Security, notes that a bigger issue than international trafficking is drug use among youths in the State, particularly 'merla,' a popular drug in Brazil made from the byproducts left over during production of cocaine.

18. (SBU) Reflecting on the larger problems Maranhao faces, Fontoura noted that back when he was active in the federal police he mostly worked in the south and south eastern regions of the country and that as a result he never seen anything like the poverty and social conditions that exist in Maranhao. (Note: From 2003-2005, Maranhao ranked next to last in the human development index among Brazilian states; at .683 for 2005, Maranhao's figure is lower than Bolivia and Guatemala, the least developed countries in Latin America. End note.) "We need more money for everything," Fontoura observed, and as a result, the state government successfully appealed to the Federal government for Federal funds through the PRONASCI program (Note: Maranhao was not included in the PRONASCI program; it was originally designed to go towards the 11 cities with the highest crime rates in Brazil. Although Maranhao ranks low in homicide rates within Brazil ranked 23rd out of 27 jurisdictions in homicide rates, it ranks among the middle third of states in most other crime statistics, according to the 2007 Annual Index of the Forum Brasileiro de Seguranca Publica. Only two other states,

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however, spend less per capita on public security than Maranhao. End note.).

19. (SBU) Fontoura observed that prison overcrowding was a significant problem for the state, noting that there are only a few prisons in Maranhao, and prison riots frequently break out as a result, including one that was taking place at the moment of the meeting. (Note: according to Ministry's of Justice's National Department of Prisons, there are five prisons in Maranhao, and six holding facilities in a state with a population of about six million; as of June 2008, there were about 5,300 persons in prison or held in custody and space for only 2,500. End note.). According to Fontoura, the state recently came out with a public security plan that will use PRONASCI funds to build several prisons and to establish a state presence, through community councils, in every slum, starting in the capital city of Sao Luis. These councils, according to Fontoura, should help in establishing a government presence in neighborhoods by establishing a mechanism for dialogue between communities and public security forces, helping administer social programs, and monitoring at-risk youth. He added, however, that it was an extremely uphill climb and they were just getting started setting up these councils.

Comment:

110. (SBU) As noted in ref a, there is mounting evidence that traffickers adjusted to the "shootdown" program by shifting their trafficking activities to more secure routes, particularly the unpoliced Amazon river. Traffickers shifted their patterns but the Brazilian government has been slow to adjust to the new tactics, mainly due to the considerable challenges in personnel and resources the Federal Police faces.

111. (SBU) Comment, cont. As one of poorest states in Brazil, Maranhao has an extremely limited ability to provide public security. Public Security officials are making the best of a tough situation and have put in place an approach that has garnered attention from the national government, who found their proposed plan worthy enough to be included as part of PRONASCI, and could begin to pay dividends in the long-term

if executed on a sustained basis.
KUBISKE